

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 10453

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (TINDEMANS), CSCE, BE, US

SUBJECT: VISIT OF PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS; DISCUSSION

TOPICS: CSCE

REF: BRUSSELS 10322

1. BEFORE THE HELSINKI AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT SHARED THE WESTERN PREOCCUPATION THAT SUCH AN AGREEMENT MIGHT ENCOURAGE WESTERN PUBLIC OPINION TO FORCE GOVERNMENTS TO CUT DEFENSE SPENDING AND THEREBY LOWER THE WESTERN GUARD. WHEN THAT DID NOT COME TO PASS, THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT BEGAN TO FOCUS ON THE ADVANTAGES FOR THE WEST IN THE HELSINKI AGREEMENT.

2. THE HUMAN RIGHTS ASPECTS OF THE CSCE HAVE STRUCK A GENERALLY RESPONSIVE CHORD IN BOTH THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT AND IN BELGIAN PUBLIC OPINION. THE EMPHASIS THAT USG HAS PUT ON HUMAN RIGHTS AS A BASIC PRINCIPLE OF OUR FOREIGN POLICY ALSO HAS BEEN WELL RECEIVED.

3. THERE IS, HOWEVER, AN UNDERCURRENT OF CONCERN AMONG BELGIAN OFFICIALS THAT OVER-EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, IF IT APPEARS TO BE DIRECTED AT THE SOVIET BLOC, MIGHT DAMAGE THE PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE WEST AND THE USSR AND BE INEFFECTIVE IN ENCOURAGING LIBERALIZATION IN THE EAST. THE
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BELGIANS HAVE PRIVATELY EXPRESSED CONCERN AT TIMES THAT THEIR INTERESTS COULD THUS BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY WHAT THE SOVIETS MIGHT CHOOSE TO REGARD AS A U.S.-SOVIET CONFRONTATION.

4. ANOTHER UNDERCURRENT OF BELGIAN CONCERN IS THAT TOO MUCH EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS COULD ENCOURAGE LIBERALIZING AND NATIONALISTIC ELEMENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE TO UNDERTAKE ACTIONS

THE SOVIETS WOULD NOT PERMIT. ANOTHER FORCEFUL SOVIET INTERVENTION AS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN 1968 WOULD CRUSH ANY HOPE FOR PROGRESS IN EAST-WEST RELATIONS FOR YEARS TO COME. WE CAN EXPECT THE BELGIAN, WHILE STRONGLY ENDORSING THE PRINCIPLE, TO COUNSEL CAREFUL APPLICATION OF WESTERN POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS, SPECIFICALLY TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT POSSIBLE PSYCHOLOGICAL REACTIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE.

5. THESE CONCERNS REINFORCE A DESIRE THE BELGIANS HAVE ALREADY EXPRESSED, I.E. TO HAVE THE CLOSEST POSSIBLE COORDINATION ON CSCE MATTERS WITH THEIR EC PARTNERS (BRUSSELS 7898) AND WITH THEIR NATO ALLIES (USNATO 7033). IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT WE EXPECT TINDEMANS TO DISCUSS CSCE MATTERS DURING HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON.

6. BELGIAN VIEWS ON THE ORGANIZATION AND PROBABLE DURATION OF THE BELGRADE CONFERENCE WERE REPORTED IN BRUSSELS 9399. THE BELGIANS ARE PLEASED WITH THE OUTCOME OF THE PREPARATORY CONFERENCE AND, AS REPORTED, HAVE SELECTED ONE OF THEIR ABLEST DIPLOMATS TO LEAD THEIR DELEGATION TO THE SUBSTANTIVE CONFERENCE. CHAMBERS

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